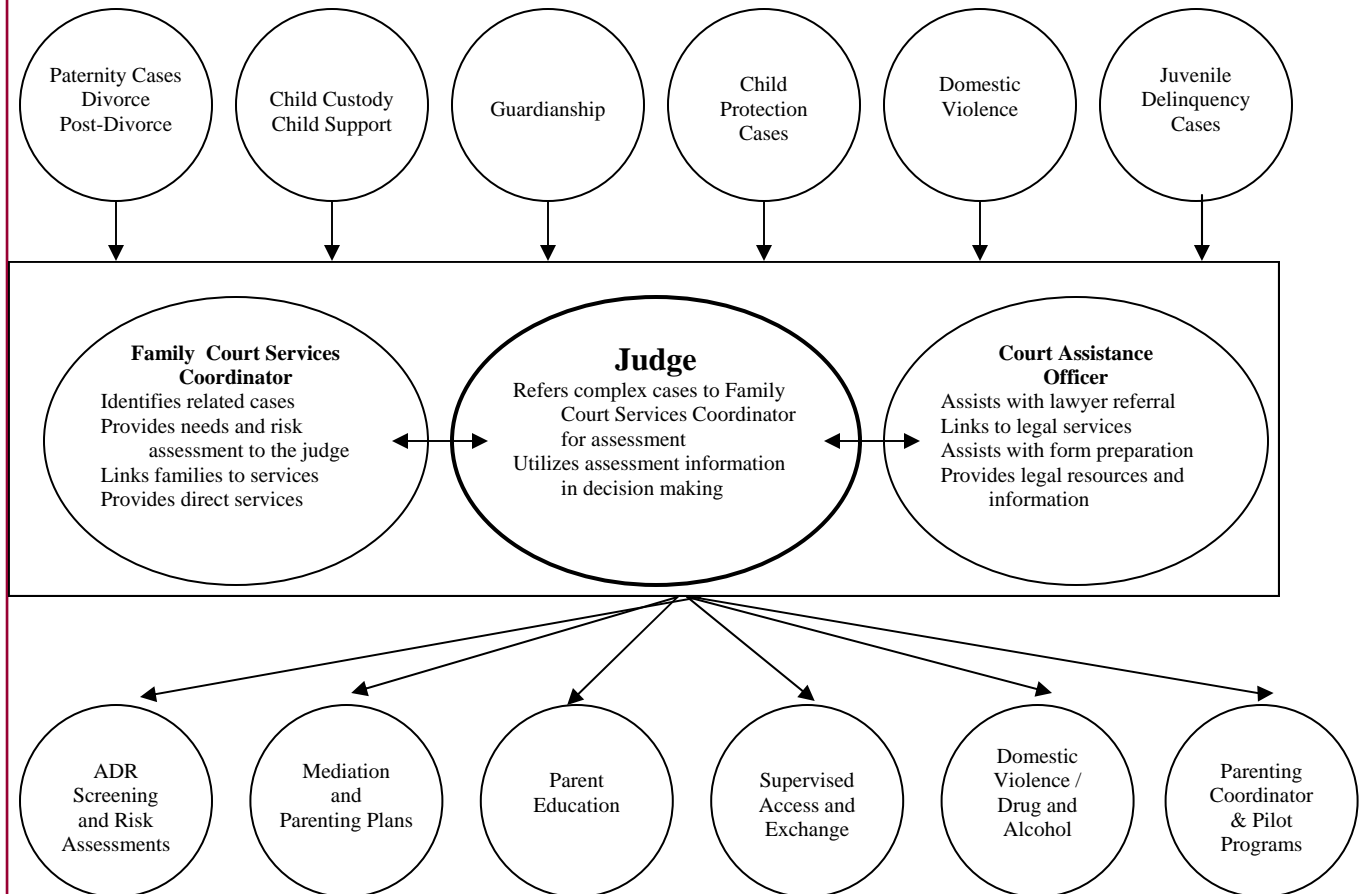


# Children and Families in the Courts 2004

## Report to Governor Dirk Kempthorne And the First Regular Session of the 58th Idaho Legislature

In 2004, nearly 60,000 Idahoans received Coordinated Family Court Services through Court Assistance Offices, Family Court Services Coordinators, parent education and other direct services. This represents a 25% increase from the numbers served in 2003 and nearly double from 2002 when 32,000 Idahoans were served. These services are designed to reduce conflict, protect children and increase positive outcomes for families. Magistrate Judges heard an increasing number of court cases involving children and families in 2004 with thousands of cases proceeding without attorneys. The leadership, dedication and innovation, coupled with Coordinated Family Court Services, Court Assistance Offices, and other court improvement efforts, strengthened the court's response to these difficult court cases last year.

### COORDINATED FAMILY COURT SERVICES



## Children and Families in the Courts 2004

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### Family Court Services Coordinators

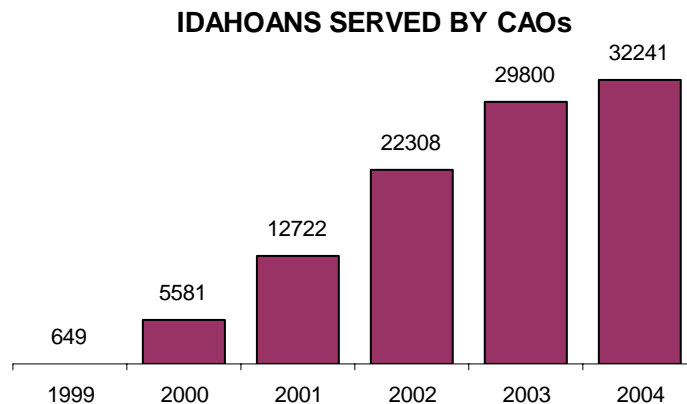
All seven judicial districts now provide Family Court Services, with six districts having a Family Court Services Coordinator (FCSC). The Coordinator is an important resource to the judge in assessing the needs of families, providing direct services as well as coordinating court-ordered services and resources for families. In 2004, 11,500 Idahoans received court-connected services impacting more than 18,000 children statewide. Additionally, FCSCs provided resource information and referrals to an estimated 16,000 Idahoans in 2004.

### COURT ASSISTANCE OFFICES

In 2004, Court Assistance Officers (CAO) were contacted more than 32,200 times for direct services, with almost 60% relating to domestic relations cases involving children. All of Idaho's 44 counties now have legal information available to the public through Court Assistance Offices and 38 of the counties have officers in the courthouse to provide direct services. The officers provide access to legal referrals and forms and instructions in routine court cases including family law, landlord-tenant, and name change. The CAO website allows on-line access to CAO services statewide. In 2004, 105 standard court forms were approved by the Supreme Court for use and included on the website.

Also in 2004, the Supreme Court successfully collaborated with Idaho Legal Aid Services on their application for a two-year Technology Initiative Grant from the national Legal Services Corporation. The approved grant will enable development of computer-based court forms which will produce accurate, complete, and legible forms in both English and Spanish, as well as clear, simple instructions on how to use each form, and will be accessible simultaneously on the Idaho Legal Aid Services and Idaho Supreme Court-Court Assistance Offices web-sites.

In addition, Idaho Court Administrative Rule 53 was adopted to provide standards and guidelines for operating Court Assistance Offices statewide.



## Children and Families in the Courts 2004

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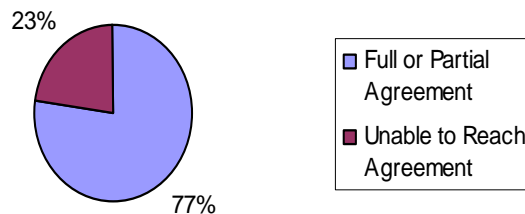
### ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR)

In 2004, ADR screenings were ordered in 281 high conflict cases, a 29% increase in the number ordered over 2003. ADR Screenings are ordered in many domestic relations cases where potential risk factors are present for children and family members. ADR Screenings provide judges with important information about complex issues challenging the family.

### MEDIATION

Over 50% more families received mediation services in 2004 than in the prior year. Family Court Services Coordinators assisted 837 families by providing mediation services directly or assisting the family to access a mediator during the year. Family Court Services tracked some of the families who participated in mediation services and found that of the families tracked, 77% reached a full or partial agreement. Statewide, many more families were court-ordered to mediation to resolve their issues.

**Results of Mediation in a Sample of Cases**



### SUPERVISED ACCESS

In 2004, 285 parents were able to maintain a relationship with their children due to supervised access and supervised exchange services. Supervised access and supervised exchanges allow contact between parents and children when certain risk factors are present. This service allows children to have access to both parents during a time when there is potential risk to children and family members, if appropriate.

### PARENT EDUCATION CLASSES

In 2004, over 4,900 parents attended parent education classes for divorcing parents. An exit evaluation from parents who attended the classes statewide indicates that 90% of parents plan to make a stronger effort to work with the other parent to reduce parental conflict for the sake of their children. Parent Education Classes are provided in all seven judicial districts and are designed to heighten the parents' awareness of the emotional and developmental needs of the child. The information prepares parents for mediation by helping them focus on their children's needs.

## **Children and Families in the Courts 2004**

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### **Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Intervention**

In 2004, Youth Courts in Idaho served approximately 650 youth and over 300 status offenders accessed services. The Idaho Courts receive Millennium Funds to support Youth Courts, Status Offender Services and other programs targeted at prevention and intervention of juvenile delinquency as it relates to addressing tobacco and/or substance abuse issues. In addition, judges handling juvenile cases around the state provide leadership to innovative programs that target and redirect delinquent behavior and build skills such as Truancy Court, Runaway and Beyond Control Court and Bannock County's "Constructing a Future" Program.

### **Child Protection**

In 2004, a national technical assistance team reviewed the ISTARS child protection module that has been in the development phase for the past year. The module met or exceeded national best practice recommendations for 95% of functional standards and outcome measures. The child protection module will be piloted in the first, second and sixth judicial districts in January 2005 and will be implemented statewide by the fall of 2005. The case tracking capabilities of the ISTARS child protection module will ensure timely permanent placement for Idaho's most vulnerable children. Additionally, the statewide data generated by the child protection module will inform court improvement efforts.

### **Ada County Family Violence Court**

In 2004, the Ada County Family Violence Court heard approximately 1,138 cases with approximately 20% of these cases requiring coordination of the family's domestic relations, domestic violence and criminal no-contact orders. All of the domestic relations cases in this project had family violence issues.

### **Pilot Projects and Statewide Efforts on Behalf of Children and Families**

A number of programs to further serve families are being piloted in individual communities and on a statewide basis including:

- Programs for children whose parents are divorcing in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> judicial districts.
- Appointment of a Guardian ad litem in divorce cases in the 3<sup>rd</sup> judicial district.
- Interim Parenting Time Evaluation project in the 6<sup>th</sup> judicial district.
- Parenting Coordinators statewide.
- Family Violence Court pilot project in the 4<sup>th</sup> judicial district.
- Child Protection Case Coordination in the 6<sup>th</sup> judicial district.
- Case Coordination and Case Management project in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> judicial districts.

The complete report on Children and Families in the Court is posted on the Supreme Court website at [http://www.isc.idaho.gov/family03\\_2.pdf](http://www.isc.idaho.gov/family03_2.pdf). If you have questions or need additional information please contact:

**Patricia Tobias**  
**Administrative Director of the Courts**  
**Phone: 208-334-2246**  
**E-mail: [ptobias@idcourts.net](mailto:ptobias@idcourts.net)**